

Henry Moss, AIA
557 Sudbury Road
Concord, MA 01742

Brookline Preservation Commission
Town Hall, 3rd Floor
Brookline, Massachusetts

December 23, 2020

H. H. Richardson House, 25 Cottage Street

Dear Commissioners,

It is disappointing to see the renewed attempt to destroy Richardson's home (and office). The unusual house has West Indian ancestry as a summer home, but its central value is to materially represent the Town's powerful contribution to cultural history with Richardson's house paired with Olmsted's Fairsted.

Neither direct demolition nor demolition by neglect is a suitable outcome as Richardson lived and worked in the house. He was certainly the most influential architect of the period following the Civil War, both locally and nationally.

My personal associations with Richardson's work was restoration of Union Station in New London, Connecticut and restoration of the Hayden Building on Washington Street in Boston. I also chaired the Boston Society of Architects Historic Resources Committee for twenty-five years, where we thought the house was protected by an easement. If that has lapsed, I beg the Town to find a new way to keep Brookline's design heritage intact by saving Richardson's house from the wrecking ball.

Yours truly and with confidence that you can find a way...



Henry Moss

THE NEW YORK
LANDMARKS
CONSERVANCY

December 24, 2020

Brookline Preservation Commission
Brookline Town Hall
333 Washington Street, 3d Floor
Brookline, MA 02445

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Re: John Charles Olmsted House, 222 Warren Street, Brookline

Dear Board of Commissioners:

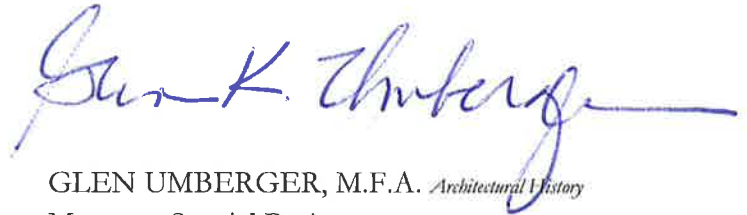
We understand that there is a pending application for the full demolition of the former residence of John Charles Olmsted (1854-1920) located at 222 Warren Street in Brookline, Massachusetts, known to him as "Cliffside," and would like to submit this letter in opposition of such action.

Olmsted, the nephew and stepson of the imminent American landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, was also a noted landscape architect in his own right and while living at Cliffside was employed in the design firm initially founded by his father designing city parks, residential developments, and landscapes for major civic architectural commissions. These projects promoted Olmsted's use of a site's unique natural beauty to harmonize with the built environment, and the natural beauty of Brookline was no doubt a source of inspiration for him. It was also here at Cliffside that Olmsted died on Wednesday, 25 February 1920, ending nearly four decades of work that still can be found throughout the United States.

The house at 222 Warren Street today is not only significant as the last home of John Charles Olmsted, where he resided during the peak of his career, it also provides a strong historical context to Olmsted's life: Olmsted was born in Geneva, Switzerland, spent part of his youth at Tosomock Farm in Staten Island, New York (Frederick Law Olmsted Farmhouse, NR 2020), but it was here at Cliffside in Brookline, Massachusetts where Olmsted became the famed landscape architect, continuing the legacy of his father. Incidentally, it is also a fine example of nineteenth century American domestic architecture that appears to be relatively intact.

Accordingly, the New York Landmarks Conservancy urges the Brookline Preservation Commission to delay the demolition of 222 Warren Street and work with the owner to ensure that the house is properly preserved for future generations.

Respectfully submitted,



GLEN UMBERGER, M.F.A. *Architectural History*

Manager, Special Projects

The New York Landmarks Conservancy

cc: Peg Breen, President
The New York Landmarks Conservancy

/gku

Brookline Preservation Commission
Preservation Planner, Tina McCarthy
tmccarthy@brooklinema.gov

RE: Demolition Delay Hearing for H. H. Richardson home
25 Cottage Street
Brookline, MA

I am writing today to urge the Brookline Preservation Commission to delay demolition of the Richardson House and respectfully request extensive research and discussion with the developer regarding the building and grounds long-term preservation through public-private partnerships, local Community Preservation Committee (CPC) grants and pursuit of an endowment to preserve and maintain this cherished landmark.

As a Graduate of Tulane University's Master of Architecture, I know the cultural impact Henry Hobson Richardson had on my early career development. The impressive Richardsonian Romanesque Revival architecture of Tulane University's campus inspired me and countless others to pursue a career in architecture. Richardson's legacy should and must be preserved as the father of our nation's civic architecture. H. H. Richardson is one of the "recognized trinity of American Architecture" along with Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright.

The Richardson House is a significant part of the state of Massachusetts and our nation's cultural history and represents not just the built legacy of Richardson as perhaps the most important architect in United States History, but the complex and interesting man and family behind the legacy.

Many aspects of the Richardson House remain intact and should be preserved as a national historic landmark of places. While short term efforts to maintain the house have had limited success, what is needed is a robust, permanent protection for this nationally significant house that national landmark status can provide.

The Henry Hobson Richardson house is a local and national treasure and must be preserved and maintained meriting pursuit of National Historic Landmark status, the Nation's designation for properties of exceptional importance; only a few buildings and landscapes in Massachusetts have earned this status in a program administered by the National Park Service.

The Henry Hobson Richardson house is significant to our nation's history not only because of the role Henry Hobson Richardson played in the architectural development of our great nation but also because it will allow people to study how Richardson lived and worked to greater understanding of this nation's great Architect. The demolition of the H. H. Richardson home is a travesty of the greatest magnitude that cannot be undone after demolition has begun. Henry Hobson Richardson's home must be protected and preserved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "B. Carolyn Nutt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "B." and last name "Nutt" clearly legible.

Beatrice Carolyn Nutt, Carolyn Nutt Architecture, LLC
14 Weston Road
Hingham, MA 02043

23 December, 2020

Tina McCarthy
Preservation Commission
Brookline, MA
via e-mail to tmccarthy@brooklinema.gov

Deleted: RICHARDSON HOUSE

Dear Ms McCarthy,

Almost anyone, we suspect, with an architectural awareness living in Boston has fallen under the sway of H. H. Richardson. Even confirmed modernists admit to his influence and admire his vigorous originality and the robustness of his buildings. He towers over nineteenth century American architecture.

We've long felt that Brookline was enormously fortunate to have within a block or so of each other the F. L. Olmsted home and office and the house Richardson lived in for the last years of his life. Both buildings have long been important elements in our standard tours for friends and colleagues who visit us in Brookline. They are central to the story of late nineteenth century Boston history and design.

We followed closely 15 or so years ago when the Richardson house was threatened. We breathed a deep sigh of relief when the house was seemingly saved through the wonderful effort of many Brookline-ites and others. Now we read with absolute horror that the building is once again under threat of demolition. It feels as if we have as a society learned nothing since the destruction of the John Hancock house over 150 years ago. The economics of development continue to trump culture and history. The momentum of 100+ years of historic preservation is nothing against the short-term financial gain of one or another developer.

We're writing to plead as strenuously as we can that the Preservation Commission stop this demolition now and do whatever is in its power to find some way to preserve the legacy of one of our greatest American architects.

Dale Flecker
Jaylyn Olivo
60 Waverly St
Brookline, MA 02445



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December 24, 2020

Brookline Preservation Commission
Attention: Valerie Birmingham & Tina McCarthy
Brookline Town Hall
333 Washington Street
Brookline, MA 02445
Via email: vbirmingham@brooklinema.gov;
tmccarthy@brooklinema.gov

**Re: Reject the Request to demolish the homes of
John Charles Olmsted (Cliffside, 222 Warren Street)
and Henry Hobson Richardson (25 Cottage Street)**

Dear Preservation Commission:

Some rare neighborhoods hold a unique place in our history because they were home to an extraordinary confluence of talented individuals. That is surely the case in the Green Hill neighborhood of Brookline, MA, listed on the National Historic Register, where Frederick Law Olmsted (FLO), John Charles Olmsted (JCO) and Henry Hobson Richardson worked within yards of one another, shaping 19th and early 20th century architecture and landscape design in ways that continue to reverberate today.

Given this singular history, the National Association for Olmsted Parks urges the Commission to reject requests to demolish the homes where JCO and Richardson lived and worked.

This Green Hill part of Brookline could, accurately, be described as "Mr. Olmsted's Neighborhood" filled with family and friends closely associated with landscape architect FLO, who resided at Fairsted (99 Warren Street). It was also home to Isabella Stewart Gardner and Charles Sprague Sargent, among other notable Bostonians, whose taste and teachings influenced cultural trends in architecture, landscape and horticultural design in America.

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The neighborhood constituted a veritable “artists’ colony” and working campus of national significance. In fact, it was at the suggestion of Richardson that FLO moved to the Green Hill area of Brookline in 1883. The proximity of their homes made family interaction and professional collaboration between these two great friends easy, as they created a unique aesthetic for buildings integrated into their landscapes.

FLO’s home, Fairsted, is now part of the National Park System because of the enduring importance of the work by FLO, his sons and firm over a period of a hundred years, working with Richardson and others. Indeed, Fairsted served as home and office and became the first full-scale landscape architecture practice in the country.

JCO, Olmsted’s son, played a critical role in establishing the profession of landscape architecture, shaping professional business practices at Fairsted and designing its landscape. He worked as a partner with his father and then established the Olmsted Brothers firm with his brother Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. in 1898 after FLO retired. During his career, JCO was responsible for nationally-significant park designs in Seattle and Portland as well as Essex County, NJ, and Louisville KY, where FLO offered initial consultations. JCO was also a founding member and first president of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

The proposed development of nearly 4.5 acres, and attendant destruction of the homes of JCO (222 Warren) and Richardson (25 Cottage), would obliterate this unique neighborhood. Both houses have significant historical associations, substantial integrity, and are critical pieces of a historic design community, chosen specifically by FLO to be the home of his visionary practice. The neighborhood embodies a vital part of the heritage of Brookline, the greater Boston area, and American cultural history.

The homes also sit upon valuable open green space, essential to Brookline’s community character and ecological health. The proposed development would destroy both environmental and historical assets and significantly undermine the integrity of this unique and historic residential neighborhood.

2022 will mark the bicentennial of FLO’s birth. In that year, Americans everywhere will be asked to participate in ***Olmsted 200***, a coordinated national and regional celebration that will explore the life, leadership and enduring influence of Olmsted, Olmsted’s sons, and the Olmsted Firm whose projects have literally transformed American life and culture.

That legacy includes the historic undertakings in the Green Hill neighborhood.

In the face of a global pandemic, there is no more important time to preserve, protect and educate about the collaboration of these American innovators who explored the intersection of design and social welfare and promoted the economic, social, health and environmental impacts of thoughtful design on all communities.

We urge you to reject the demolition requests so that parties may identify ways to preserve this historic and nationally significant community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anne Neal Petri". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anne" being the most prominent.

Anne Neal Petri
President and CEO

Founded in 1980, the National Association for Olmsted Parks is the only national organization dedicated solely to advancing the legacy, vision and values of Frederick Law Olmsted. NAOP is also the managing partner of Olmsted 200, the national celebration marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of Frederick Law Olmsted in 2022, www.olmsted.org.

FRIENDS OF OLMSTED-BEIL HOUSE

STATEN ISLAND, NY



December 24, 2020

Preservation Commission
Brookline, MA

(via email to vbirmingham@brooklinema.gov &
tmccarthy@brooklinema.gov)

Re: 222 Warren Street
Full Demolition Application
December 29, 2020 Calendar; Item #2

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Dear Chairperson and Members of the Preservation Commission,

I write as the President of the Friends of Olmsted-Beil House, a not-for-profit corporation whose mission is to protect, preserve, and present the Olmsted-Beil House, the home of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., from 1848 to 1855, located in Eltingville on Staten Island. The Olmsted-Beil House, parts of which date to the 1680s, is a New York City Landmark and is listed on the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places. It and the surrounding farm were the place that many of the ideas that formed the legacy of Olmsted were germinated.

His nephew and later-adopted son John Charles Olmsted lived there for a time and learned much from Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. However, he came into his own when the firm moved to Brookline. And it is from his house there at 222 Warren Street that many of his visionary projects and great ideas sprang. These include major design work in Boston, Buffalo, Detroit, Rochester, Atlanta, Hartford, Louisville, Brooklyn, Chicago, and other cities. After Frederick Law Olmsted's retirement, John Charles Olmsted developed park systems in Portland, ME; Essex County, NJ; Seattle; and Spokane. These commissions led to institutional and residential designs in many of the communities where the firm had created parks, as well as planned industrial communities, such as in Depew,

NY, and for the National Cash Register factory in Dayton, OH. John Charles Olmsted worked on the Alaska-Yukon Pacific Exposition, now the grounds of the University of Washington. He was a founder of the American Society of Landscape Architects and its first president.

In sum, this structure is far from being only a significant local site; it is also the birthplace of ideas and projects that have shaped the nation's landscape and green spaces for decades. While the manifestations of those ideas are important today, it is also important to preserve the physical source—this place—from which those important ideas emanated, a place for people to remember, honor, learn from, and understand the seminal ideas of John Charles Olmsted, which continue to be relevant today.

You have a treasure and a piece of history that must be protected and nurtured. I hope for this and future generations that the Preservation Commission will deny this demolition application.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Eileen Monreale".

Eileen Monreale

President
Friends of Olmsted-Beil House, Inc.
P.O. Box 120095
Staten Island, NY 10312

**SOCIETY OF
ARCHITECTURAL
HISTORIANS**

22 December 2020

Ms. Valerie Birmingham
Preservation Planner
Brookline Preservation Commission
Brookline Town Hall
333 Washington Street
Brookline, MA 02445
vbirmingham@brooklinema.gov
617-730-2089

Ms. Tina McCarthy
Preservation Planner
Brookline Preservation Commission
Brookline Town Hall
333 Washington Street
Brookline, MA 02445
tmccarthy@brooklinema.gov
617-730-2612

Re: Opposition to the proposed demolition of 25 Cottage Street, Brookline, MA

Dear Ms. Birmingham and Ms. McCarthy:

The Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) expresses strong opposition to the proposed demolition of 25 Cottage Street, located in Brookline, MA, the location of H.H. Richardson's home and office during his productive, final years of practice.

H.H. Richardson lived and worked at 25 Cottage Street from 1874 until his death in 1886, during which time he produced his most important work. Built ca. 1803, 25 Cottage Street is located near 99 Warren Street, where Frederick Law Olmsted established Fairsted, his residence and professional office, which has been justly recognized as a National Historic Landmark and a National Historic Site. The close relationship between these two extremely influential Americans cannot be underestimated and bears closely upon the significance of 25 Cottage Street. As Richardson's biographer Marianna Griswold Van Rensselaer noted, Richardson "was constantly turning to Olmsted for advice, even in cases where it seems as though it should have little practical bearing upon his design." It is our understanding that 25 Cottage St. has been purchased, and a demolition application filed to be heard at the Brookline Preservation Commission's meeting on December 29, 2020.

H.H. Richardson, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright are recognized as the three American architects whose works most significantly shaped the direction of late 19th and early 20th century American architecture. Richardson's works, such as the Marshall Field Wholesale Store (Chicago, 1885-87), had a transformative impact upon the careers of Sullivan and Wright. His public buildings, including Trinity Church (Boston, 1878-86), the Winn Memorial Library (Woburn, MA, 1876-79), and the Thomas Crane Public Library (Quincy, MA, 1880-82), were remarkable architectural essays in the adaptation of the Romanesque to an American vernacular. While best known for his public buildings and monuments, Richardson also designed a small number of influential residences, such as the William Watts Sherman House (Newport, RI, 1874-76), the F.L. Ames Gate Lodge (North Easton, MA, 1880-81), and the John J. Glessner House (Chicago, 1885-87).

From 1874 until his death in 1886, Richardson not only lived in the house with his family, he used two rooms on the ground floor as his professional office and library. Richardson later constructed an attached drafting room, which has subsequently been demolished. After his death, his widow continued to rent the house until she was able to purchase it in 1891. 25 Cottage Street remained in the Richardson family's ownership until 2000, when it was sold following the death of H. H. Richardson III. In subsequent years, there have been a series of efforts to secure the future of 25 Cottage Street and ensure its preservation, including efforts by the Committee to Save the H.H. Richardson House. In 2004 Preservation Massachusetts listed 25 Cottage Street on its Massachusetts Most Endangered Historic Resources List,

Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources; in 2007 the National Trust for Historic Preservation listed it on their 11 Most Endangered Properties list.

The preservation of 25 Cottage Street is essential to an understanding of H.H. Richardson's life and work, and is in itself a rare surviving example of this type of dwelling. The Society of Architectural Historians strongly opposes the demolition of 25 Cottage Street, and asks that the full 18-month demolition delay be imposed, so that time may be used to seek alternatives that will result in the preservation of this landmark.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. C. G.' followed by a horizontal line.

Bryan Clark Green, Ph.D., LEED AP BD+C
Chair, Society of Architectural Historians Heritage Conservation Committee

cc: Mr. Kenneth Breisch, Ph.D.; Mr. Jeffrey Cody, Ph.D.; Mr. Anthony Cohn, AIA; Mr. David Fixler, FAIA; Ms. Priya Jain, AIA; Mr. Theodore H. Prudon, Ph.D., FAIA, Ms. Pauline Saliga; Ms. Deborah Slaton; Ms. Victoria Young, Ph.D.; Members, SAH Heritage Conservation Committee; Mr. Elton Elperin, Chair, Mr. Richard Panciera, Vice Chair, Mr. James Batchelor, Ms. Wendy Ecker, Mr. David Jack, Mr. Peter Kleiner, and Mr. David King, members, Brookline Preservation Commission; Mr. Dennis De Witt, SAH New England Chapter.